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Book Review:
Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michał Krzyżanowski. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2008

The new book released by the scholars from Lancaster University and the University of Vienna, who are grouped around the renowned critical discourse analyst Ruth Wodak, is a very **useful** and **timely** position within the burgeoning writing on discourse analysis. The structure of the book is well suited to didactic purposes, and the concise and well formatted chapters containing much illustrative material makes the presentation lucid. Several key ideas and concepts of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (such as discourse, text, context, genre and the like) are elegantly and comprehensively presented by Ruth Wodak in the introductory chapter. Eight chapters that follow the introduction can be viewed as a mosaic of CDA applications diversified with regard to:

1) discipline within which CDA methods are applied (e.g. communication studies, political science, and sociology),

2) research material (oral and written, verbal and visual, formal and informal talk and text and the like), and

3) methods (corpora analysis, conversational analysis, rhetoric analysis and visual discourse analysis).

Since the book's main purpose is to serve as a textbook of discourse analysis for undergraduate and graduate students, it is worthwhile to discuss several methodological and theoretical points that the book's content and structure instigate.

The first basic point that needs considering, is whether discourse analysis (DA) is rather a set of methods or a broader theoretical and methodological framework. In the book the editors and several authors emphasize that they consider the DA in trans-disciplinary terms. Thus they would rather see it as a framework, which has an ambitious goal of making social sciences rethinking their ontological and epistemological underpinnings. At the same time, a skeptical reader might disagree that this feature is unique to discourse analysis. The **linguistic turn** started to have a perceivable influence in social sciences in the 1960 and 1970. The changes instigated by the reception of the works of linguistic structuralists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, analytical philosophers interested in language, such as John Austin or Ludwig Wittgenstein, have led social sciences into a variety of directions. Not to mention originally sociological approaches that emphasized the role of language and linguistic cognition (e.g. microsociology of Erving Goffman or ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel). In other words, the claim of discourse analysis for being a unique

trans-disciplinary approach emphasizing the role of language in the construction of social reality should be qualified.

Discourse analytical approach is indisputably one of the outcomes (or by-products) of the linguistic turn in social sciences. In parallel, it is a consequence of the interest in text and talk that the linguistics demonstrated in the second part of XX century. The simple fact that discourse analysis draws attention of social scientists to interaction and meaning does not make it unique. What seems to be an "added value" of discourse analysis (critical discourse analysis, in particular) as a trans-disciplinary approach in its own right is its problem-oriented character. It makes DA instrumental in addressing complex problems of contemporary societies and creatively engaging in a wide range of theoretical and normative debates. Another characteristic feature of discourse analysis is its ability to address mass communication and politically produced texts as research material. Thus DA allows transcending the limits of microsociological or ethnographic approaches that concentrate primarily on "naturally occurring conversation" or situations of face-to-face interaction. This feature is a double edged sword and can be seen as both strong and weak point of DA (I will return to this point later in the section on context).

The book is a proposal for such social sciences as sociology, political science, international relations, and perhaps history. The authors of the book have applied the theoretical categories of some of these **disciplines** in their analysis (e.g. the concept of populism from political sciences in the chapter by Martin Reisigl). At the same time, the book signals that not all paradigms within these disciplines are receptive to discourse analysis to the same extent. In other words, within the disciplines there are niches, in which discourse analysis finds applications, such as qualitative sociology or political theory (e.g. discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe). In international relations, and especially in the field of European Studies, although perhaps not a mainstream, discourse analysis is present and one can even speak of different approaches to DA (e.g. Copenhagen School on International Relations or Governance School). Discourse analysis is less welcome in empirical political science which has its rigid methodological requirements stemming from a particular epistemological premises it relies on. For instance, one issue of *Qualitative Methods* (2004), an American Political Science Association Newsletter, was devoted to the juxtaposition of discourse and content analysis. Most of the participants emphasized that though political scientists deal widely with text and oral communication, DA is not a well established research framework and other methodologies, e.g. content analysis, or frame analysis are more wide spread. Thus, the question that supersedes the frameworks of the "Qualitative Discourse Analysis...", but seems highly relevant for further investigation of the role of discourse analysis in and for social sciences is: are the modes of reception (and mode broadly modes or trans- and inter-disciplinarity) institutionally, epistemologically, or otherwise conditioned?

The textbook openly declares its epistemological underpinnings by introducing the word "**qualitative**" in the title. It is thus not likely to draw attention of positivistically minded social scientists, and at the same time it is appealing to social scientists sharing an interpretative or constructivist paradigm. Simultaneously, the title contains a declaration that there is more than one way of doing DA and the field is vast enough to differentiate between (qualitative and quantitative) approaches. I consider this an important message and an opening of the discussion on the appropriate methods of discourse analysis for interpretative and positivistic social sciences respectively.

Turning to more particular points that the textbook triggers, this issue of **context** appears to be of vital importance for DA. According to several authors of the volume the theoretical rationale and methods of incorporating context into DA framework deserve particular attention. In much DA research context seems to be incommensurable to the sample of texts analyzed, the decisions for including some parts of the context and not others seem rather arbitrary. In the introductory chapter Ruth Wodak emphasizes that the concept of "context" has utmost importance for DA, she also mentions that beginners find it difficult to properly position it, since the very concept is polysemic in DA. What is more, context has a variety of functions (e.g. in Chapter 4 "Analyzing TV Documents" by Alexander Pollak, context is related to production and reception *intentions* and *expectations* (towards TV documentaries), and not solely to some of the social and political underpinning of their production (pp. 77-78, cf. 92-93).

Virtually all the authors of the book grapple with the concept of context demonstrating the possible understandings and practical ways of dealing with the context in DA research. For instance, Martin Reisigl in Chapter 5 "Analyzing Political Rhetoric" devotes a separate section to the context pointing to the necessity of defining context through time, actors, genres and fields involved in social communicative practice (pp. 103-104). Greg Myers in Chapter 6 "Analyzing Interaction in Broadcast Debates" pays attention to intertextuality and situationality of discourse thus making these categories crucial to defining the scope of contextual data (pp. 124-126). Several of the authors mention that they present only a snippet of the actual research, for the limitations of the article' size do not allow them for more details to be included. The discussions of context demonstrate that discourse analysis is still searching for the ways of more effective and methodologically accurate accounting for the context.

On the other hand, the discussions on the context presented in the volume indicate that monograph is probably the best format for a piece of discourse analytical research, which in this sense becomes very similar to an ethnographic study. The possible interactions between discourse analysis and **anthropological** paradigm are still understudied, although in interdisciplinary fields, such as organization research, these analytical frameworks have often been going "hand in hand" (e.g. Kostera 2003). Chapter 9 on the relations between DA and ethnography by Florian Oberhuber and Michał Krzyżanowski is an intriguing attempt of directly addressing this issue by the scholars working in CDA. The authors aim at connecting "thick description" (Geertz 1973) that is obtainable through participant (or non-participant) observation of organizational routines with the detailed attention to how interaction is discursively constructed. Two questions that stem from the reading of this chapter are worth noting since they are also relevant to other chapters (e.g. Chapter 7 "Analyzing Research Interviews" by Jackie Abell and Greg Myers and Chapter 8 "Analyzing Focus Group Discussions" by Michał Krzyżanowski).

First question refers to whether the choice of the material to be analyzed by DA methods (oral vs. written communication) affects the conceptual framework of the study. Does the choice of oral communication makes the research more actor-oriented, while concentrating on written documents lead to more structure oriented optics? On the one hand, organizations – that are presented as a field of research in Chapter 9 – are written cultures, much of their products are various types of written genres, from a promotional leaflet to business meeting minutes to logo and the like. On the other hand, researchers of organization have shown that informal interaction – i.e. oral discourse – matters much in organizational functioning (e.g. Czarniawska

1997). It seems that the choice of oral or written is not theory-blind decision. Much of oral discourse analysis demonstrate the flexibility of structure and potency of social actors while written discourse analysis demonstrate the power of structures and limitations they impose on individual and group subjectivities.

The second question is of a rather different nature and refers to ethical (or ideological) underpinnings in the choice of a site for ethnography by a discoursed analyst. "Studying up" coined and first advocated by Laura Nader (1974) and later developed by other anthropologists (e.g. Wedel et al. 2005) has caused some tensions in anthropology as a discipline for, unlike studying marginalized subaltern groups, it suggested looking at elites. Thus the air of social advocacy inherent in many of anthropological studies (in American cultural anthropology, in particular) gives way to a more critical approach to the subjects of the study, especially in the case of powerful organizations, e.g. police, European Commission and the like. Therefore, when a critical discourse analyst thinks about doing ethnographic research, is it a coincidence or a rule that more powerful organizations will be considered as potential sites? Since aiming at bettering and/or eliminating of unjust social practices is one of the critical analysis main goals this seems highly likely.

Yet another more particular issue refers to the "**tool-kit**" of critical discourse analysis. For instance, Chapter 2 "Analyzing Newspapers, Magazines and Other Print Media" by Gerlinde Mautner, presents a set of analytical instruments that are almost classical to CDA. These include the categories of transitivity, modality and argumentative strategy. It seems that there exists a set of linguistic categories that CDA researchers most eagerly use in their analysis. This is partly due to the nature of these categories (they are usually linguistic categories that indicate the relation of linguistic phenomenon to social – or more broadly – non-linguistic reality – phenomenon). Although it might be an enterprise bearing a risk of limiting the field, it is perhaps worthwhile to construct a vocabulary (or grammar) of such categories for the beginners who would like to get the first insights into the methodology.

The volume does not attempt presenting such a "grammar" (although it contains a very useful glossary of the key terms, pp. 204-208), rather it draws readers' attention to a variety of the research possibilities that the framework of discourse analysis is capable of opening. The authors and editors avoid limiting the field, their aim is to promulgate the discursive reflexivity and discourse analytical skills as widely as possible in social sciences. Not only through its content, but also through the clear structure, graphically emphasized mnemonic and didactic devices and selections of basic and recommended literature to particular chapters, the volume will perfectly fulfill the role of a **textbook** of CDA and will be instrumental in promoting discourse analytical framework in the academic institutions.

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